

**NEW HAMPSHIRE HISTORIC AGRICULTURAL STRUCTURES  
ADVISORY COMMITTEE  
(RSA 227-C:27 -- 227-C:32)  
BIENNIAL REPORT  
NOVEMBER 2016 - NOVEMBER 2018**



**Arlyn Farm, Plymouth, New Hampshire, then and now**  
*Photograph courtesy of the Division of Historical Resources*

**SUBMITTED TO**

**HIS EXCELLENCY CHRISTOPHER T. SUNUNU  
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# NEW HAMPSHIRE HISTORIC AGRICULTURAL STRUCTURES

## ADVISORY COMMITTEE

### BIENNIAL REPORT

NOVEMBER 2016 - NOVEMBER 2018

*Historic barns and agricultural structures symbolize the distinctive New Hampshire values of heritage, hard work, productivity, and stewardship. They are witnesses to the role of agriculture in our state's image and its economy, and they serve as scenic landmarks for residents and visitors alike. They are among our most highly valued heritage resources, but many can no longer generate sufficient income to prevent their loss by decay or demolition. In order to assist the owners who are making an effort to preserve these irreplaceable assets, it is hereby declared to be public policy and in the public interest of this state to establish a matching grants program consisting of funds from private and public sector grants, gifts, and donations for preserving historic agricultural structures in New Hampshire.*

RSA 227-C:27, 1999

**The Historic Agricultural Structures Advisory Committee was established by HB 395** (Chapter 285, Laws of 1999), which became effective as RSA 227-C:27 – 227-C:32 in July, 1999. The Committee, generally known as the Barn Committee, first met in October 1999. Accomplishments in the twenty years since then have been significant and have been done by a very dedicated group working to save and protect New Hampshire's iconic barns and other agricultural outbuildings and landscapes. The Barn Committee draws on the expertise, efforts and time of staff at state and federal agencies and non-profit organizations from the fields of preservation, conservation and agriculture. Please see Appendix I for a list of current Committee members and agencies represented.

Throughout this report period, the Barn Committee met and dealt with wide range of topics in three areas of activity: tax and other financial issues, education and outreach, and technical assistance. Agendas and meeting minutes are available at [https://www.nh.gov/nhdhr/programs/barn\\_committee.htm](https://www.nh.gov/nhdhr/programs/barn_committee.htm).

#### TAX AND OTHER FINANCIAL ISSUES

- Property tax relief has proven to be an effective ingredient in aiding property owner and municipality efforts to save and revive historic agriculture structures. One of objectives of the Barn Committee is to encourage and promote the Discretionary Preservation Easement, RSA 79-D, which gives barn owners who actively maintain their historic barns and other agricultural outbuildings a reduction on the assessed value of their barns in exchange for a ten-year preservation easement, held by the municipality. Prior to the expiration of a ten-year easement on a property, the New Hampshire Preservation Alliance, a member of the Barn Committee, sends out letters outlining the renewal process to municipalities and barn owners. Committee members have also analyzed the impact of the easement renewals on current easement holders. They have also been working closely with the Department of Revenue Administration to reach a

common understanding regarding how preservation easements will be renewed after their initial ten-year period.

- Since it was enacted in 2002, as a result of the Barn Committee's work with members of the Legislature, this program has grown to now include 567 barns and other historic agricultural structures enrolled in the program (as of December, 2018). Ninety-five towns and cities are now utilizing the incentive in order to encourage barn preservation in their communities. The Committee offers continued support by answering various questions about the administration of the program, as well as coming up with solutions for preserving historic barns throughout the state. Towns and owners that received direct help over the past two years were in Boscaawen, Kingston, Moultonborough, and Stratham.

## EDUCATION AND OUTREACH

- The Barn Committee hosts a booth at the annual NH Farm & Forest Expo every year. This effort has helped to educate the public about the value of historic barns, to offer advice to barn owners, and to inform booth visitors about the efforts of the Committee. The booth typically includes a "barn door" that features photos of barns from around the state, and engages children by being a regular participant in "FARMO." It is staffed by volunteers and representatives from the Barn Committee, the Division of Historical Resources and the NH Preservation Alliance.
- Also at the NH Farm and Forest Expo, the Barn Committee engages panelists and guest speakers and sponsored sessions relating to barns, including "Working to Save New Hampshire's Old Barns" (2018) and "Carriages Houses, Carriage Barns & Cottage Stables" (2017). "Working to Save New Hampshire's Old Barns" featured a panel of three recipients of New Hampshire Preservation Alliance Assessment Grants, who described how they have preserved and reused their historic barns. Tom Visser, author of "Field Guide to New England Barns," presented "Carriages Houses, Carriage Barns & Cottage Stables," which covered an often overlooked type of barn, urban barns. Both presentations were attended by over fifty people each.
- With the support of the Barn Committee, the New Hampshire Preservation Alliance held a year-long promotion in 2017, called "52 Barns in 52 Weeks," with the goal of saving fifty-two barns throughout the year. It was successful in highlighting unique agricultural features in New Hampshire's landscape as well as building a larger network of barn owners and contractors. Other highlights that resulted directly from this program included: fifty-two barn owners were awarded assessment grants, three communities are conducting town-wide barn surveys, National and State Register nominations currently are in progress, and a historic barn was saved by relocating it and reconstructing it on another site within the state. The Alliance's work with barns can be seen on its webpage; <https://nhpreservation.org/old-barn-resources-overview/>.
- Barn Committee members contribute to a variety of workshops, barn tours and programs. At NH Preservation Alliance barn events, barn preservation contractors showcase active projects or participants tour a number of historic barns in a community. Committee member John Porter is a popular speaker on the value of historic barns and gives talks regularly; "Interesting Features in Old Barns" and "History of Agriculture Told by Barns" continue to be well-attended, presented numerous times throughout the

year. Over the last two years, Committee members have promoted barn preservation at barn events in Brentwood, Concord, Harrisville, Haverhill, Laconia, Loudon, Manchester, Pittsfield, and Portsmouth.

#### TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

- At the request of the barn owners, the Committee's Education & Outreach Task Force visits a barn or barns that provide public benefit, but pose challenges or opportunities for the owners. Some barn owners need advice on reuse, and others need advice on saving or repairing their barn. Barns recently toured include those at the Arlyn Farm and Italian Farm Kitchen in Plymouth (2018), and the Collier Barns in Grantham and the Hodgdon barn in Croydon (2017).
- In the late summer of 2018, the Barn Committee visited two sites in Plymouth: the Arlyn Farm and Italian Farm House Kitchen. The Arlyn Farm barn is currently vacant; the Italian Farm House barn recently opened as an events venue. The Committee gave advice on reuse options to the owner of Arlyn Farm given its location off of a busy highway and its commercial zoning. The trip concluded with a visit to the recently relocated historic barn at the Italian Farm House Kitchen. The barn was moved to its current location from Canterbury – where the former owner could no longer maintain it – and was meticulously reconstructed to its former reconfiguration, with some adjustments to accommodate a working kitchen and bathroom facilities. The barn serves as a location to host events such as weddings.
- The Committee visited two historic farm properties in various stages of restoration in Croydon and Grantham in the fall of 2017. The Grantham property owner was seeking help in prioritizing the repair of his agriculture structures and the return of his land to agricultural use. The Committee offered advice on what to prioritize and advocated for the preservation and reuse of the additional rare and historic outbuildings still extant at the farm. This visit was featured in the local newspaper, *Valley News*, in the September 22, 2017 article, "Barn Preservation." The Education and Outreach Task Force visit concluded at a nearby gambrel barn, Hodgdon Barn, in Croydon. There, the property owner was nearing completion on restoring his barn. The Committee believes the former poultry barn was originally built to be a high-style horse barn as seen by the many stalls and ornate features.
- The Barn Committee with author John Porter is nearing completion on the publication of the expanded edition of its popular publication, *Preserving Old Barns – Preventing the Loss of a Valuable Resource*. The handbook's new edition will include various topics relating to barns such as the purpose of various features, a history of New Hampshire barns and their construction, a detailed technical section providing advice on repairs and maintenance, and will feature updated photographs of barns throughout the state. Plans are to publish the book in the summer of 2019.





**Advisory Committee visit to the Collier Barns, Grantham, New Hampshire**  
*Photograph courtesy of the Division of Historical Resources*



**Collier Barns, Grantham, New Hampshire**  
*Photograph courtesy of the Division of Historical Resources*



**Advisory Committee visit to the Hodgdon Barn, Croydon, New Hampshire**  
*Photograph courtesy of the Division of Historical Resources*



**Advisory Committee visit to the Hodgdon, Croydon, New Hampshire**  
*Photograph courtesy of the Division of Historical Resources*

## **FUTURE DIRECTIONS – BARN COMMITTEE OBJECTIVES**

### **OBJECTIVES**

- Raise awareness of the challenges and opportunities of preserving New Hampshire's barns and other historical agricultural outbuildings.
- Assist a variety of groups, communities and individuals throughout New Hampshire with barn preservation efforts through educational and outreach programs, financial assistance, and technical advice.

### **FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE – RSA 79-D TAX INCENTIVE PROGRAM**

- Promote increased use of easements by various means, such as direct contacts with property owners and local governments, and publicity in various publications, including the Municipal Association's "Town and City."
- Increase the number of participating towns and cities (95).
- Assist with interpretation questions and encourage use of explanatory Q & A's on websites.
- Promote renewals and continue work with New Hampshire Department of Revenue Administration to improve 79-D application forms.

### **TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE**

- Use existing and new opportunities to increase public awareness of the importance of barn preservation
- Support John Porter in the creation of the new edition of *Preserving Old Barns – Preventing the Loss of a Valuable Resource*.
- Collect and promote re-use models.
- Conduct Education & Outreach Task Force Field Visits and share the results with advocates and the public.
- Expand information on New Hampshire Preservation Alliance and New Hampshire Division of Historical Resources websites.
- Distribute information on barn preservation best practices and respond to specific information requests as they arise.

### **EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMMING AND OUTREACH**

- Farm and Forest EXPO as a presenter and exhibitor
- John Porter's presentations to communities across the state
- New Hampshire Preservation Alliance's barn tours and workshops
- New Hampshire Preservation Alliance's biennial conference and *Seven to Save* program
- Barn Committee's Biennial Report to the Governor and Legislature
- Share new and evolving information about barn preservation challenges, successes and needs through diverse media outlets as well as quarterly meetings of the Barn Committee and information sharing with the Committee's large network of constituents.



## Appendix I

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*Members are as specified by RSA 227-C:29*

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*This report has been prepared by the NH Division of Historical Resources, on behalf of the Barn Committee, in accordance with the legislative directive at RSA 227-C:29, II. For more information, please contact:*

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